Golden Harvests with eager anticipation, but then finding it not very helpful for understanding compound life in general. Maloka comes to the same conclusion but argues that resistance and accommodation to missionary efforts was itself an aspect of worker agency. In examining 'death, dying and mourning', after a thorough look at illness, accidents and accident rates, Maloka points up the pathetic levels of compensation paid by the mines. He then turns to Basotho worker representations of death and dying itself. On the one hand, he uncovers an 'invisible' struggle by miners to assert their humanity against mine authorities by asserting customary respect for the dead. On the other hand, both traditional Basotho and Christian converts demonstrated a remarkably stoical acceptance of the price paid in death and injury for the symbolic rewards of mine work. Maloka calls this a '*koata*-coping strategy' and points to the way it limited militant action.

The final chapter examines the coping strategies of women in Basutoland itself, creating beershops and brothels, even at this early stage. Maloka also discusses in detail the feckless efforts of local and colonial authorities to cope with these developments. Here it is that *botekatse* (uncontrollable women) enter his story, both defiant and pathetic at the same time. Openly defying the patriarchal structures of Basotho society, these women provided sexual and other services for migrants, loving them while also robbing them, accommodating precisely to the tough *koata* style that enabled the miners' conceptions of themselves as men.

In conclusion, this book is a useful regional contribution to our widening knowledge of the migrant labour system in South Africa and how its consequences for rural life vary depending on local circumstances. Maloka claims to have made a contribution to theoretical debate in social history but this seems less convincing to me. Finally, I would have appreciated more discussion of who made up 'the Basotho elite', their relations to missionaries and chiefs, and their world which the migrants so decisively rejected. The return of the migrants surely affected not only ordinary families but also the lives of 'respectable' Basotho in ways that Maloka leaves entirely undiscussed. An historical discussion of changing relations between migrants and 'respectables' would surely have been a timely intervention at this particular juncture in the story of Lesotho.

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TABITHA KANOGO, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50*. Oxford: James Currey (pb £16.95 – 0 8214 1568 9); Athens, OH: Ohio University Press (pb $24.95 – 0 8214 1568 9); Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers (price not stated), 2005, 272 pp.

This study is an engaging addition to Kenya's social history. Focusing upon the law, missions, schools, marriage and the household, Kanogo explores the myriad of responses by women to colonialism. Entwining archival material and oral testimony, Kanogo emphasizes women's 'opportunities for physical and cultural migration from old ways of life to new ones' (p. 12). Their new-found transience complicated attempts, described in the first chapter, by officials and elders to define the legal status of women. In trying to determine the age at which women reached majority (if they did so at all) and thus legally existed independently of fathers and husbands, administrators set out on a path fraught with contradictions. As Kanogo demonstrates in discussing runaways

and converts to Islam, women asserted agency in the space between customary and statutory law. The sexuality of mobile women unnerved administrators and elders, who reacted by attempting to codify the abduction of women, divorce, rape and polygamy within the law, as described in the second chapter.

It is unsurprising that the following chapter is given over to bitterly resisted attempts to restrict or prohibit clitoridectomy. European and African proponents of regulation fuelled the politicization of the practice, which in turn consolidated its position as a marker of Kikuyu ethnicity. In contrast to this well-known episode, the subsequent chapter on dowry is more original. Here Kanogo explores changes to the practice in response to European conceptualizations of the custom, monetarization, individualization, and the determination of missions for their members to marry within their own congregations. The codification of dowry was part of a broader attempt, described in the fifth chapter, to make marriage more recognizable to European eyes. Legislation tried to prevent child marriage, encourage demonstrations of women's consent, introduce formal registration and assign guardianship of children to widows in case of a husband's death. As exemplars of colonial modernity, Christian women were experiencing significant change in every aspect of their lives, including childbirth. As we see in the penultimate chapter, the frailties of scientific knowledge, accentuated by colonial parsimony, were exposed in rural hospitals with inadequate maternity facilities. These shortcomings added to suspicion caused by the employment of male dressers as midwives, the marginalization of traditional midwifery and the accommodation of expectant mothers in wards alongside the sick. Modern womanhood demanded a high price. Of all the processes of rapid social change, the final chapter demonstrates education had the greatest transformative effect for young women, but was a common site of contestation between male heads of households and their junior female relatives. By opening up the possibility of movement outside of local areas, and even as far as Britain, education demanded the loosening of the bonds tying young women to home. Their return could be as traumatic as their departure, as they brought back to the homestead the manners and customs of the mission school.

While very readable and informative throughout, Kanogo's work is not without sources of contention. With a focus on the few highly educated, Christian women, there is a tendency throughout to stress the historical specificity of the colonial period. Women's responses to colonialism are represented as new and dislocated from the past. The formation of hybrid identities built upon pre-colonial foundations is rarely considered. Borrowing Cooper's terminology, Kanogo gives great attention to the conflict between colonialism and African subjects and between male elders and women, but rather less to the possibilities for accommodation between those actors. If colonial rule was such a dominant factor, this raises the question that Kanogo, unlike Lynn Thomas, leaves unanswered: what happens to concepts of womanhood in the post-colonial era? These reservations aside, there is much to admire in this book. The treatment of education is particularly fine and the preference for a country-wide perspective instead of a local study is welcome. Indeed, the broad geographic, temporal and intellectual scope is this book's greatest strength. While readers with a prior knowledge of colonial Kenya will find little new, they will appreciate the diligent survey of the burgeoning studies of African women. Those seeking a comprehensive introduction to the subject should look no further, although the work of Luise White and Lynn Thomas is more

innovative. Ultimately, however, this is a book that deserves to be widely read.

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HEIDI J. NAST, *Concubines and Power: five hundred years in a northern Nigerian palace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (pb US$22.95 – 0 8166 4154 4; hb US$68.95 – 0 8166 4153 6). 2005, 280 pp.

Heidi Nast has written a book that should change the way we look not only at Kano but also at the history, culture, human geography, and/or social and political evolution of Hausaland more broadly and Africa in general, especially the processes of state formation and Islamization. Trained in geography, Nast has written a book with important new data and significant new interpretations. Her book demonstrates the importance of geographical methods to history, in particular by the way she relates changes in political and economic structure of the state to changes in the structures of both the palace and the town around it.

Nast's basic theoretical premise is, as she puts it, that 'in agrarian-based state contexts reproduction moves history'. By looking at the history of the role of concubines in the Kano palace she assembles evidence that concubines were critical to the assessment and collection of grain tax, which she argues did more to support the Kano state in its early days than the slave estates which figured so prominently later and which many historians have projected back into the very early days of the Kano Kingdom. She also argues that royal concubines helped to unite the expansive kingdom by tying their natal place to the centre. Since children of concubines were free, and male children could inherit the throne, concubines had an interest in the perpetuation and expansion of the state – in particular the inclusion of their natal place within the kingdom. Thus the acquisition of concubines was important to the expansion of the Kano Kingdom.

Perhaps Nast's most surprising assertion, based on her find of an extensive indigo-dyeing field in the concubine quarters of the palace, is that royal concubines monopolized the dyeing of indigo cloth, and that the later production of indigo cloth by men in the nineteenth century was an innovation brought on by the Sokoto *jihad* and the associated shift to a dynasty of Fulani Islamic scholars. This suggests new directions for the study of the economic and political history of the Sokoto Caliphate, and even the role of indigo-dyeing industries run by such Islamic scholars as the founder of the rebel Ningi state, although that is not mentioned in the book.

It is not just geography that is important to the findings in this book. The author shows a strong familiarity with the Hausa language and its use of concepts in an extended, metaphorical sense. Linguistic skill is not just a tool which can be provided by hiring interpreters; it is necessary to get into the mind of a society, especially one like Hausa where metaphors, wordplay and linguistic skills are so important, and where the sense of humour depends so much on wordplay and puns. Her analysis of the various meanings of 'to eat' (*ci*) in Hausa and its relations to 'inside' and 'stomach' are useful and elucidating, as well as indispensable to her interpretation of the data.

The book does have a few shortcomings. It is surprising that the author does not recognize that early concubinage in Kano may have been a juridical fiction. Since Islam only allows four wives legally, other wives may have been legally classed as 'concubines' without an actual change of status. This appears